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FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6583  
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1410  
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0160  
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 1072  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 0514

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000531

SIPDIS

KINSHASA FOR EMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/14/2010  
TAGS: PREL PGOV SU LY US CD  
SUBJECT: AMB BECHIR SEEKS U.S. SUPPORT FOR "HIS"  
GOC-SPLM-JEM INITIATIVE AND DENG ALOR COMMENTS

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Classified By: DCM REGribbin for reasons 1.4 b&d

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) Chadian Ambassador to the U.S. Bechir told AMB and DCM November 14 that the opportunity was ripe for the incoming Obama administration to engage President Deby at a senior level to craft an end to the Darfur/Chad crisis. Bechir described his own role as Chad interlocutor for dialogue with SPLM leader and GOS VP Salva Kiir in a common effort to "solve Darfur through Chad." Bechir said that process was the most credible because, unlike other interlocutors, the SPLM had a vested interested in success. Bechir repeated standard GOC line that denied any equivalency between Chadian and Sudanese situations, noting that Chadian rebels were political opportunists supported by Sudan, whereas there were real roots to the Darfur conflict. Bechir reluctantly agreed that Chad could burnish its standing with continued internal political reform, especially holding credible elections in 2009, asserted that President Deby was intent on staying in power only as long as it took to restore Chad's security against external threat; and repeated his plea for President Deby to be received in Washington in a visit that would permit a meeting there with the U.S. president.

¶2. (C) When on the margins of Dakar Accord CG meeting here, we asked Deng Alor to comment on Bechir's project, Deng agreed that it had some merit, especially that Deby could trust the SPLM to work honestly for a peaceful resolution, and noted that "we have known Deby since the eighties." He volunteered that there is deep animosity between Deby and Bashir. Alor thought the "five-hour" meeting between Pagan and Khalil was important as it represented the first real substantive contact between the two movements in a long time.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Bechir clearly intends to capitalize on his position in DC to advance an issue of great moment to him, i.e., furthering the GOC-SPLM-JEM dialogue that he helped nurture and seeking dramatic improvement in relations with the United States. His partisanship aside, his points merit some consideration. The should have SPLM a vital interest in resolving Darfur and the coming change of administration in the U.S. does open opportunities for new players to engage in new ways. Leaving the latter issue for the new team to consider, we do endorse U.S. encouragement of the SPLM initiative. Like the other ones out there, it too may not go very far. But if it could become a mechanism to build trust between N'Djamena and Khartoum, then for that reason alone it merits support. END SUMMARY.

¶4. (C) Ambassador Mahamoud Adam Bechir, who is home for several days, breakfasted with Ambassador and DCM November 14. Bechir began by describing the status of the SPLM/Chad dialogue, noting that it began in the US on the margins of the Democratic Convention between himself and SPLM party chief Pagan Amum. Subsequently, an SPLM delegation visited N'Djamena, talked to the government, including Deby, and met for five hours with JEM representative Khalil Ibrahim in the East. Bechir stated that the SPLM process was quite credible because, unlike other initiatives underway - Bassole, Dakar Group, Qatar, etc. - the SPLM had a vested interest in peace. He explained that the SPLM's objective is implementation of the CPA and that continued strife in Sudan risks undermining progress. In both hats -- representing the South as well as participating in the central government in Khartoum -- the SPLM, especially Salva Kiir, needs to foster conditions conducive to success. Bechir said that Kiir was a man Chad could trust to speak forthrightly and deal directly, while President Bashir's team did not generate such confidence. Chad felt that Kiir could deliver and that he was well placed to convince Bashir to take realistic steps to end the crisis. Ambassador Bechir reported that he had just returned from a trip to Juba to plan next steps. Next would be a visit to Chad by Kiir. He asked for strong US support for the SPLM/Chad undertaking. He said that US endorsement would go far to convince all the parties of the seriousness and viability of the initiative.

¶5. (C) On the wider issue of Darfur, Bechir said that the road to resolution ran through Chad. He stated that Deby was ready to be more active, but needed to be cultivated and encouraged by the U.S. Recalling Obama's pledge to entertain more contact with states not in the best of favor, he said that Chad would respond to new initiatives. He attributed

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Deby's reticence heretofore to being treated as a second rate player. Noting that Obama's last African stop was Chad, Bechir said that an early invitation to the White House or a first overseas trip by a new Secretary of State to N'Djamena would work wonders. He added that unlike other global crises - Iraq, Afghanistan or the Middle East - Darfur was solvable, if America wanted to put new weight towards it. Bechir recalled that both candidates regularly reiterated that Darfur was a foreign policy priority. He concluded that it was now time to move ahead. That meant, Bechir said, securing U.S. support for joint GOC-SPLM pressure on JEM and the GOS to bring peace to Darfur.

¶6. (C) We engaged Bechir in discussion of how more visible and real progress towards democracy would rebound to Chad's advantage. Credible legislative and communal elections in 2009 would demonstrate real commitment to inclusiveness and would diminish rebel claims to be legitimate political players. Chad had some favorable developments to build on, especially the August 13 process, but also its ready engagement with the UN and EU on peacekeeping, not to mention openness to humanitarian operations. Bechir took the point, asserting that President Deby was intent on staying in power only as long as it took to restore Chad's security against external threat. He countered that all the Chadian rebel leaders were also veteran Chadian "politicos" whose personal ambitions had been thwarted. He said they existed as a rebel menace only because Khartoum wanted them to. He rejected the equation of Chad and Sudan rebels as equivalent problems, noting again, however, that were Chadian issues resolved, Darfur would follow.

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ENGAGING ALOR  
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¶7. (C) On margins of Dakar Contact Group meeting November 15, DCM spoke with Sudanese FM Deng Alor regarding the SPLM initiative. DCM recounted Bechir's enthusiasm, Deby's

approval, and noting the Chadians position that the GOC could trust the SPLM to work honestly for resolution and for peace, i.e., reining in Chadian rebels. Alor agreed, stating that "we have known Deby since the eighties." He volunteered that there is deep animosity between Deby and Bashir. Alor thought the "five-hour" meeting between Pagan and Khalil was important as it represented the first real substantive contact between the two movements in a long time. DCM asked Alor how he thought Obama's election might impact in Sudan. Alor recounted a November 3 meeting between himself and Bashir when Bashir asked who might win? Alor said polls indicated it would be Obama. Bashir seemed puzzled and said that would be bad for Sudan because Clinton had shot missiles at Khartoum.

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COMMENT  
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¶8. (C) Regarding Ambassador Bechir's "SPLM Initiative," it was clear that he sought to capitalize on his position in DC to advance an issue of great moment to him, i.e., furthering the GOC-SPLM-JEM dialogue that he helped nurture and seeking dramatic improvement in relations with the United States. His partisanship aside, his points merit some consideration. The SPLM does have a vital interest in resolving Darfur and the coming change of administration in the U.S. does open opportunities for new players to engage in new ways. Leaving the latter issue for the new team to consider, we do endorse American encouragement of the SPLM initiative. Like the other ones out there, it too may not go very far, but then again, if it can become a mechanism to build trust between N'Djamena and Khartoum, then for that alone it merits support.

¶9. (C) Regarding DCM's chat with Alor, we leave it to analysts to figure out if Bashir was being deliberately disingenuous or whether he was just oblivious to American events. If the latter, he is the only political leader in Africa who was not following our election pretty closely.

END COMMENT.

NIGRO